

CITY OF MUSKEGON
PLANNING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES

September 10, 2015

Chairman T. Michalski called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. and roll was taken.

MEMBERS PRESENT: T. Michalski, B. Mazade, J. Doyle, L. Spataro, S. Gawron, B. Larson, F. Peterson, J. Montgomery-Keast

MEMBERS ABSENT: B. Smith, excused

STAFF PRESENT: M. Franzak, D. Renkenberger

OTHERS PRESENT: D. Kamps, 1885 Buys Rd; J. Buist, 1239 Terrace St.; B. Turnquist, 1575 E Harbour Towne Circle; B. Greenwood, 1309 Peck St.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion that the minutes of the special meeting of August 13, 2015 be approved, was made by B. Larson, supported by J. Montgomery-Keast and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Hearing, Case 2015-15: Request for a Special Use Permit (SUP) to allow a non-profit organization to establish a residence for young adults that have recently aged out of the foster care system in an RM-1, Low Density Multiple Family Residential district at 1319 Peck Street. D. Kamps of Step Up provided an executive summary document explaining how the organization was formed, its mission, and their funding. Their proposal was to provide housing and guidance for up to four young women and a mentor. Step Up's purpose is to assist young adults that have recently aged out of the foster care system transition to independent living. A SUP is needed because although this is a multi-family zoning district, this house will be one contiguous unit and the tenants do not meet the zoning ordinance definition of "family". A "family" is defined in the zoning ordinance as: One or more persons living together and related by the bonds of blood, marriage, guardianship, foster relation, or adoption, and not more than two additional unrelated persons, with all such individuals being domiciled together as a single, domestic, housekeeping unit in the dwelling. The zoning ordinance allows "Adult Foster Care Large Group Homes" as a special use permitted in this district. This use is not the same, but is similar enough to warrant a public hearing for the use. Property owners and tenants within 300 feet were notified of the proposed use. R. Rischar, of 1302 Peck St, is supportive of the proposed use. M. Celestin, who owns 1316 Sanford St, is also in support.

S. Gawron asked if the SUP would apply to this organization only. M. Franzak stated that was correct. D. Kamps explained that "Step Up" was a non-profit organization currently affiliated with Community EnCompass, and he discussed their mission. L. Spataro stated that he was a member of the Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network and had concerns

about transitional housing. He stated that lenders like MSHDA were moving away from this in favor of permanent supportive housing. J. Buist stated that this facility would not be a typical transitional living center like a homeless shelter, but rather a place for young adults to live until they were stable and were able to get their own place. They did not expect a quick turnover of residents. D. Kamps addressed the question of program sustainability, their plans to finance the program, and the financial expectations for the residents. B. Mazade thought that foster children had the option of remaining in the state foster care program until the age of 26. D. Kamps stated that some of the residents may still be eligible for state aid through the foster system. He stated that Step Up had formed a working relationship with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and they had suggested possible candidates for the program. L. Spataro asked if this house previously contained multiple apartments. M. Franzak stated that it did.

B. Turnquist stated that he was in favor of the request. He had heard about the program and believed it would be a positive for the community. B. Greenwood lived next door and was also in favor. She stated that the applicants had contacted the neighbors to explain the program and answer questions.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by B. Larson, supported by F. Peterson and unanimously approved.

L. Spataro stated that the underlying use was RM-1, and 5 people in the house would be less density than what was allowed under the RM-1 zoning. He was in favor of the request as long as it did not become a room and board situation. T. Michalski stated that he was satisfied that the SUP conditions would not allow that.

A motion that the special land use permit, per Section 701 of Article XII of the Zoning Ordinance, to allow the use proposed in the “Step Up Executive Summary”, be approved, based on compliance with the City’s Master Land Use Plan and conditions set forth in Section 701 of the City of Muskegon Zoning Ordinance was made by B. Larson, supported by B. Mazade and unanimously approved, with T. Michalski, B. Mazade, J. Doyle, L. Spataro, S. Gawron, B. Larson, J. Montgomery-Keast and F. Peterson voting aye.

Hearing, Case 2015-16: Staff-initiated request to amend the Master Land Use Plan to remove all references to Fisherman’s Landing. M. Franzak stated that staff recommended removing all references to Fisherman’s Landing in the Master Plan. Doing so will keep the City’s options open in the event of a land swap in the future, and make the transition easier. A list of locations in the Master Plan where Fisherman’s Landing was mentioned was provided in the staff report.

F. Peterson explained a past situation involving Fisherman’s Landing, which led to this request. He stated that this park was not in the City’s charter as a charter park.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by B. Mazade, supported by B. Larson and unanimously approved.

A motion that the proposed amendments to the City of Muskegon’s Comprehensive Master Land Use Plan to remove references to Fisherman’s Landing be recommended to City Commission for approval was made by B. Mazade, supported by S. Gawron and unanimously approved, with T. Michalski, B. Mazade, J. Doyle, L. Spataro, S. Gawron, B. Larson, J. Montgomery-Keast and F.

Peterson voting aye.

L. Spataro clarified that anything done with Fisherman's Landing would still require outside oversight in the form of state approval.

Hearing, Case 2015-14 (TABLED): Staff-initiated request to amend section 400 of the zoning ordinance to allow multiple family dwellings under certain circumstances in R-1, Single Family Residential districts. This case was originally brought before the Planning Commission in August. It was tabled by the board and returned to staff for revisions. Revised language was provided in the staff report. New language under Section 400: Principal Uses Permitted (in an R-1 zoning district) now states: "Multiple family dwellings (allowed) under the following conditions: a. The home has already been altered with prior approval to allow for multiple dwellings. One family dwellings may not be altered to allow for multiple dwellings, nor may new homes be built for multiple dwellings, and b) Homes that have already been altered for multiple dwellings may add additional dwellings as long the total number of dwellings does not exceed the number of dwellings that historically existed in the structure (for example, if a three-unit building was converted to a two-unit building, that building could legally be converted back to a three-unit building, but not a four+ unit building), and that all dwellings meet the living area standards listed in Section 2319."

A motion to close the public hearing was made by L. Spataro, supported by S. Gawron and unanimously approved.

A motion that the proposed amendment to Section 400 of the City of Muskegon Zoning Ordinance, to allow multiple family dwellings in R-1, Single Family Residential districts under the conditions listed in the staff report be recommended to the City Commission for approval was made by L. Spataro, supported by B. Larson and approved, with T. Michalski, J. Doyle, L. Spataro, S. Gawron, B. Larson, J. Montgomery-Keast and F. Peterson voting aye, and B. Mazade voting nay.

OLD BUSINESS

None

OTHER

Property Updates T. Michalski asked for a status update on the former Sappi property and the WaterMark building. Updates were provided by F. Peterson. He stated that there was a pending sale on the Sappi property, and the WaterMark owners had committed to a plan of action on their building.

M. Franzak advised board members that a senior housing project previously brought before the board had been resurrected at a different location. The new location is the vacant lot at First St. and Webster Ave. The development would have to meet the form-based code standards.

M. Franzak also stated that he was reviewing plans for the High Point Flats development.

Depending on what the revised plans showed, that project may also meet form-based code requirements and not require Planning Commission approval.

Proposed housing development on Houston Ave. near 4th St. J. Montgomery-Keast stated that she was approached by persons involved with the community garden at this location and they wanted to know if the garden could be incorporated into the new housing development. F. Peterson stated that there had been some discussion about the garden location, but no decisions had been made yet.

J. Doyle asked for an status update on the housing project. F. Peterson stated that they hoped to have the homes completed by early spring.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

Step Up Executive Summary

The purpose of Step Up is to provide a way for young adults aged 18-24 to transition to independence. Targeting young adults who have aged out of the foster care system at age 18, the goal of Step Up is to partner with committed youth to provide safe housing and adult mentoring to advance their social, educational, and spiritual goals toward self sufficient, responsible, productive lives. This will operate with a minimum of paid staff, a generous reliance on volunteers and a total dependence upon God's leading.

During the past two years we have become aware of the needs of significant numbers of foster youth in our community, who like other foster youth throughout Michigan, age out of the foster system at the age of 18. While some of these teenagers maintain strong, supportive relationships with their foster families, more than 50% do not. These latter youth are released from their foster care homes and expected to live on their own. In some cases, state financial and food stamp support is available for a limited time. Personal guidance and mentoring can not be adequately provided despite the state's best efforts through the Department of Human Services. The future is bleak for these young adults. Sixty percent of aged out foster youth have no place to live. Many have no driver's license, no high school diploma, and no job. Many will become incarcerated and involved in substance abuse.

After recognizing this situation confronting the 400-450 foster children (ages of infants-18 years of age) in Muskegon County, we are compelled and committed to address this need.

We believe that our community and particularly these young adults would greatly benefit from a plan modeled after similar successful programs in Michigan as well as other states.

Our plan is to own a house that provides a home to no more than four young women aged 18-24 who will live in community with a common kitchen, dining and living area while maintaining the privacy of their own bedroom. A resident house manager will oversee the daily life and responsibilities of the residents and maintain the smooth operation of the facility. This person will receive a small annual stipend from Step Up but will depend upon a separate job for her main source of income. The house manager's role is that of a loving parent who holds residents accountable for their responsibilities and actions. The board of directors will regularly meet and talk with the house manager to guide and support her. Adult volunteers fulfill the very important job of mentoring the residents. While addressing the advancement of life skills that include obtaining a driver's license, education, a job, social skills and spiritual fulfillment, these mentors will model life as the young adults progress toward the independence they seek.

The work of Step Up is financially dependent upon donor support. While some income is expected from rent paid by the residents (as detailed in the financial projections portion of this business plan), we know that the majority of the cost of establishing, maintaining and expanding this work depends upon donors.

The vision of Step Up is to equip and empower young adults in Muskegon County to be financially independent, to aspire to further their education and to find fulfillment in their work as they develop healthy relationships with others and pursue a relationship with God. Success will be measured by advancement in these areas.